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His Good Name Upheld

After the most intensive kind of investigation, including that conducted by a special board of inquiry headed by Judge E. Barrett Prettyman, the Central Intelligence Agency now has fully cleared Francis Gary Powers. For some time after the downing of his U-2 plane in Russia and his subsequent trial and imprisonment there, doubts as to his courage and loyalty were felt in many quarters, but no such doubts exist today. He has received a clean bill of honor in all particulars as a brave man who has lived up to his obligations as an American and to the terms of his contract as a pilot for the CIA.

Obviously the whole country has reason to be gratified by these findings and the job in the praise just accorded Mr. Powers by the Senate Armed Services Committee. However, although there are no longer any doubts as to the honorableness of his role in the

U-2 incident of May 1, 1960, what remains unclear is what caused the downing of his plane. At the time, Nikita Khrushchev spoke of a "remarkable" weapon, but the CIA, in the summary of its investigation (some of the facts known to it continue secret "in the national interest"), throws no light on the question. All that is revealed is that Mr. Powers said that he felt and heard something give the U-2 a kind of push, that there was "a dull noise unlike the sharp sound of a high explosive," and that there was "an orange or reddish glare which seemed to persist."

These words suggest that maybe the Soviet Premier was not making an empty boast. But the CIA, whatever it may know about the matter, is keeping mum, and so this much of the Powers story remains a mystery.